



Summary

We are formally objecting to the planning application [14/01843/EFUL](#) for the proposed redevelopment of the ex-MOD site at Ensleigh North. Although we welcome the redevelopment of this site for much needed affordable housing and proposed retail use the development falls seriously short on environmental, social and economic criteria.

This application ignores many key criteria published in the council's [Concept Statement](#) or required by its [SPD 'Planning Obligations'](#):

| Description | B&NES Concept Statement Target | Planning Application |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Affordable Homes | 35% | 11% ¹ |
| Number of homes | 350 | 280 ² |
| Housing Standards | Code for Sustainable Homes Level 5 | Minimum Building Regulation Standards |
| Allotments | 0.24 Ha | 0.093 Ha ³ |
| Formal Open Space | 1.2 Ha | 1.1 Ha |
| Natural Areas | 1.2 Ha | None |
| School | Single form entry primary | None |

Transition Bath recommends the council reject the application on the following grounds:

- Lack of provision for affordable housing – this should be revised upwards following a Viability Study to account for the less costly delivery of a care home i.e. if the developers want to use the care home to meet the affordable homes requirement, more affordable homes should be delivered above the 35% requirement where justified by a Viability Study;
- We recommend more energy efficient buildings – specifically Code for Sustainable Homes. The current application to 2010 Part L is illegal since 2013 Part L was enacted before the planning application was made;
- The provision for 'Lifetime Homes' is inadequate;
- The lack of provision of a primary school on site; we believe there should be one part paid for by the developer and partly by the council. There is already a shortage in the area and no local schools within 1.4 miles;
- Serious under-provisioning of allotments and 'natural areas';
- We recommend the council consider improved late night public transport serving the site, dedicated space for 'Car Club' parking, charging of electric bikes with cycle storage areas and provision for electric car charging.

In summary, unfortunately this application places the maximisation of development profit above the long-term environmental, social and economic criteria requirements of the City of Bath. The proposal is inadequate and Transition Bath recommends that B&NES council reject the application at this stage and ask the developers to consider all the points we raise above.

¹ The remaining 24% of affordable home provision is being delivered by the provision of 60 places in the nursing home

² Combined with the Skanska Ensleigh South development

³ We consider most of this to be unusable as its too close to the road



Detail

Sustainability

The proposed homes involve building regulations 2010 Part L rather than the Code for Sustainable Homes (CfSH) level 5 that the council has requested. The impact of this is:

- High energy bills averaging about £1000 per year per property, rather than the £600 or £200 (with Solar FITS) delivered by Code for Sustainable Homes level 5;

Given the timing of the planning application the proposal for building to 2010 Part L⁴ is illegal since 2013 Part L came into force before this planning application was made.

Additionally

- The quality of the fabric efficiency is very low, scoring on 0.5/10 in the CfSH ENE1 criteria and 5/10 in the ENE2 criteria;
- 'Daylighting' is poor because of the reduced size of windows;
- No provision is made for Solar PV which could reduce mains electricity consumption and energy costs. A 'roof integrated solution' at the time of construction would be sensible.
- Very limited provision for 'Lifetime Homes' – i.e. support for disabled access, the Design Statement (5.11) states 10% of the 24 affordable homes will support disabled access. 2.4 homes is not enough provision;
- We welcome the provision of cycle storage and low flow rate water fittings.

Skanska, in the development at Ensleigh South are managing to offer low energy (triple glazed, high levels of insulation, MVHR and solar PV); we feel like Skanska that these standards might improve the marketability of the properties?

To meet the UK's binding 2050 carbon obligations the proposed homes would need to be retrofitted to higher standards of insulation and ventilation within 30 years of being built. Such retrofitting would be significantly costly and disruptive.

We would like clarification on the following:

1. The commitment to produce homes with an average air permeability of 5 m³/m²/h.
2. Whether 'energy efficient' lighting is to include inefficient halogen lamps?

The Sustainability Statement includes a provision for 3300ft² of commercial space and appears to contradict the proposal of no such space in the Design and Access statement?

Overall the development fails to meet even a reasonable level of environmental, economic and social sustainability.

⁴ [Energy and Sustainability Statement](#) 1.1



Affordable Homes

B&NES council requires 35% affordable housing however this application proposes 20 or 24 affordable homes (11%) and a 60-bed affordable care home.

We feel the current proposal is inadequate:

1. The shortage of housing in Bath is driven by the need for affordable homes and not free-market homes. Maximising the number of affordable, non-care homes will reduce the need for free-market homes and any consequential encroachment on the green belt;
2. Ensleigh North is an inappropriate location for a care home – a long way from access to facilities in the city centre. If an affordable care home is required it would be better located as part of a brownfield redevelopment in the city centre – as per the hotels and student accommodation being developed around the Green Park Station area.
3. The concept of an affordable care home and how it differs from a ‘free-market’ care home sounds unconvincing. Care homes now charge market rates which are paid for either by the patients or by a fixed rate provided via the local authority. These rates correlate strongly with the amount of government subsidy available.

Given the affordable homes provision is determined by a Viability Study, and that this has already taken place for Ensleigh, and that this assumed distinct dwellings and not a care home we request that this study be re-run to include the reduced net costs of the care home provision. If the developer still wishes to continue to provide a care home, we feel there should be more margin available to increase overall provision of affordable homes.

We would therefore suggest the following:

- a. The developers provide justification of the need and the suitability of this location for a care home;
- b. The developers justify why they are not proposing delivering more affordable homes as distinct from the care home;
- c. The Viability Study is rerun for this site, including potentially the reduced net cost of the care home, the additional land created for market housing by its more compact size and re-assess whether there is more economic headroom on this development to justify more affordable housing above the 35% limit suggested by the council?

Allotments and Open Space

As per the council’s Concept Statement and SPD on Planning Provision this development should provide 0.24 hectares of allotment space. The currently proposal is for 0.093 hectares which is well below the council’s current requirement. In addition we also believe that the location of some of the allotment space e.g. the area highlighted in red below immediately bordering a busy road with high levels of pollutants is unacceptable.



existing Natural Green
Previous Next
ent facilities in the vicinity (includes construction and maintenance)

(Based upon Table 2.4.4 of the Bath and North East Somerset 2009 Planning Obligations SPD)

Natural Greenspace 3,413msq x £11.56 = £39,454.28

Allotments 580sqm x £10.84 = £6,287.20

Pitch Sports

There is no provision for pitch sports provide on this site as the local area is already well served within accessible distances.

ON SITE OPEN SPACE PROVISION



There is demonstrable need as evidenced by waiting lists for local allotments and we believe the scales and location of the proposed allotments and landscaping are not sufficient.

We recommend the planting of fruit trees in the formal and natural green spaces to supplement the allotment provision.

There is a shortage of 'natural areas' in the proposal despite the council requiring 1.2 hectares.

We request the developers resubmit the application with adequate space allocated to allotments and natural areas.

See www.mole-hill.ca/about/mole-hill-community-garden/ as an example of what can be achieved with integrating allotments into urban housing development.

Community

While we welcome the provision of a retail unit on the site to promote the sense of community and reduce the need for residents to drive into town for provisions the application completely ignores the other Section 106 requirements the council has requested for the site:

1. Schools:

- a. The MOD Concept statement requested a school on site, but the developers have not made provision, instead suggesting that the council's shortcomings in providing adequate justification is unlawful and as a result using this as a justification for delivering no school provision at all;
- b. There is sufficient justification for demand and the current lack of supply of primary school provision in the Upper Lansdown justifies that a school is built on site;



- c. The alternatives of St Stephens – too far away and a constrained site, and Weston All Saints Primary – too far away, no pedestrian access are both unsuitable locations for an area which is already short of school places;
 - d. The addition of 350 homes on this site and perhaps an additional 120 homes on the Royal High School recreation ground immediately adjacent to the site would generate a need for about 170 school places which is more than 80% of the provision of the requirement for a 210 pupil single form entry school;
 - e. **There is sufficient reason for the council to mandate the provision of a school on this site and for a pro-rata 80% developer funding requested for the school, with the council funding the remaining places;**
 - f. A new school would create additional employment, significantly reduce congestion during the 'school run' and allow the whole site and the immediate area in Upper Lansdown to be more socially and economically sustainable.
2. **Business Provision:** the Concept statement required the development of 2000 m² of B1 'office space'. It appears that the developers intend delivering nothing because they argue there is not the demand in Bath outside the Riverside area. Although we agree that in the short-term there is an excess of office space in Bath this will probably not be the case in future and that some provision of office space would be useful to help support for example local home owners expanding businesses beyond the current work/live units currently being offered. We ask that some provision be considered to assist local expansion of small incubator businesses.
3. **Care Home:** this application proposes that the Care Home facilities are shared with the community e.g. hair salon, exercise suite etc. We are concerned that this application fails to address any "safeguarding" of the Care Home proposal.

For inspirational urban development lessons learned during the mid-20th century please see: "The Death and Life of Great American Cities", a 1961 book by writer and activist Jane Jacobs. The book is a critique of 1950s urban planning policy, which it holds responsible for the decline of many city neighbourhoods in the United States.

Transport Strategy

The following observations arise:

- Bus provision serviced by the no. 2 and Park and Ride buses should be sufficient during the day;
- Late night access to the site using public transport as the last bus is at 20:45 (we firmly disagree with the transport assessment which states 20:15), for people using late night facilities in the centre of Bath is there a need for a more realistic later service.
- Buses will need to cater for cyclists' return up-hill journeys. This has been resolved for example in Vancouver where external cycle racks have been retrofitted to the front of all city buses.
- We would encourage the council to work with First Bus and other operators to make buses in Bath more affordable – they are among the most expensive in the UK;



- Some on site provision made for electricity charging points for electric cars – a future proofing measure;
- Although the developer claims there is no requirement for a 'Car Club' public space must be made available for 'Car Club' parking because of the disruptive changes we believe are likely to take place with private car ownership in the next 15 years as a result of [autonomous personal transport](#) ;
- Electricity points in the 'Secure Cycle' storage – a significant promotion of cycle journeys made on Lansdown Hill are made with the assistance of electric bikes because the hill is so steep

Community Involvement

The application presents an unrealistic 'glowing picture' of community involvement. Transition Bath was invited to a meeting at the Recreation Ground on October 4th but the developer representative failed to attend. Consequently, the remaining representatives of the development team felt unable to answer all our sustainability questions. Worse the developer subsequently did not respond to TB's emails on the subject. The consultation so far has been wanting and we seriously object to our name been used in support of this planning application.